

# **I. DESCRIPTION OF LUMBER RIVER STATE PARK**

## **LOCATION AND ACCESS**

Lumber River State park is located in southeastern North Carolina in Robeson, Columbus, Scotland and Hoke Counties. The park headquarters is located at Princess Ann Access in Robeson County, approximately 18 miles south of Lumberton off State Road 2246.

The park's address, telephone and fax numbers are:

Lumber River State Park  
2819 Princess Ann  
Orrum, NC 28369-0010  
(910) 628-9844 – Office  
(910) 628-5643 – Fax

The park headquarters and other park areas along the river are easily accessed by Interstate 95, US 74 and other roads. (Figure I-1)

## **PARK LAND AND VISITOR USE FACILITIES**

Lumber River State Park contains 8,008 acres of land. Much of the acreage is low-lying swamps and other wetlands, although some higher ground and sand ridges are included. Much of the park land is located along the lower river between Lumberton and Fair Bluff.

Most of the visitor use facilities at Lumber River State are clustered at the Princess Ann Access, where the park office is located. One 12-table picnic shelter, restrooms, a boat ramp, fishing pier, observation platform, primitive campsites and a 3/4 mile trail are available for visitor use. Upstream from Princess Ann, at various locations along the river, there are primitive canoe-in campsites for river users seeking one or more nights along the river.

## **RIVER TRAIL SEGMENTS**

Approximately twenty roads and highways cross the 115-mile long river. These bridge crossings, as well as other access points, serve to divide the river into segments that allow numerous options for long or short excursions on the river. Before setting out on the river, visitors are advised to contact the park office for advice on river conditions and for suggested canoe trips. A list of access points and river segments, as well as the approximate miles and paddling time between accesses, is shown on page I-3.



<b><u>BEGINNING</u></b>	<b><u>ENDING</u></b>	<b><u>MILES</u></b>	<b><u>HOURS</u></b>
S.R. 1412 (Turnpike Br.)	U.S. 401	7.8	4
U.S. 401	S.R. 1404 (River Road)	2.4	1
S.R. 1404 (River Rd.)	S.R. 1310/1433 (McGirt's Bridge)	7.4	3
S.R. 1310/1433 (McGirt's Br.)	N.C. 71 (Campbell Bridge)	5.5	3
N.C. 71 (Campbell Br.)	S.R. 1303 (Old Red Springs Rd.)	3.2	2
S.R. 1303 (Old Red Spr. Rd.)	S.R. 1153/1339 (Alma)	3.0	2
S.R. 1153/1339 (Alma)	S.R. 1354 (Red Banks)	6.4	4.5
S.R. 1354 (Red Banks)	N.C. 710-711 (Harper's Ferry)	3.0	2.5
N.C. 710-711 (Harper's Fy.)	S.R. 1554 (Three Bridges)	5.1	3
S.R. 1554 (Three Bridges)	S.R. 1003 (Chicken Road)	3.0	2.5
S.R. 1003 (Chicken Rd.)	S.R. 1550 (Lowe Road)	5.5	3.5
S.R. 1550 (Lowe Road)	N.C. 72 (McNeill's Bridge)	8.9	5
N.C. 72 (McNeill's Br.)	McMillan's Beach	2.6	2
McMillan's Beach	Stephens Park	1.4	1
Stephens Park	Noir Street Playground	1.91	1
Noir St Playground	N.C. 72 (High Hill)	2.3	1
N.C. 72 (High Hill)	S.R. 2123 (Matthew Bluff)	9.5	5
N.C. 2123 (Matthew Bluff)	S.R. 2121 (Burnt Island)	3.9	2
S.R. 2121 (Burnt Island)	U.S. 74 (Boardman)	8.1	6
U.S. 74 (Boardman)	Red Barn/S.R. 1504	7.2	3.5
Red Barn/S.R. 1504	Princess Ann	2.2	1.5
Princess Ann	N.C. 904 (Fair Bluff)	11.7	7
N.C. 904 (Fair Bluff)	North Carolina/S. C. Border	3.9	2.5

## **HISTORY OF THE LUMBER RIVER**

### **Native American History**

Pottery, tools, arrowheads, and other archaeological artifacts indicate that the limited high ground adjacent to the Lumber River has been in continuous use by Native Americans since prehistoric times. Native Americans who lived in the region from as early as 20,000 B.C. were nomadic and subsisted through food gathering and hunting (Mathis and Gardner, 1986).

Most of the archaeological work within the Lumber River region has been done in Robeson County, but it is likely to be representative of the entire region. While additional discoveries and insights into Native American life may be made, most Native American archaeological sites occur on high ground along the river. This same high ground was attractive for agriculture and silviculture in the post-Columbian era, and therefore most archaeological sites are likely to have been disturbed.

The earliest Native American period is the Paleo-Indian Period, dating possibly to 20,000 B.C.. It is characterized by nomadism, hunting and food-gathering. Distinctive tools of this period had lanceolate projectile points.

The Archaic Period, from about 8,000 B.C., saw a slight warming and consequent increase in human population and deciduous trees. Subsistence patterns of this period show a reliance on smaller animal species, the collection of flora, and also fishing and shell fishing. Adaptation to the forest environment is reflected in the tool inventory. Among the implements found are stemmed and notched projectile points on hunting paraphernalia, atlat (spear-throwing) weights, knives, axes, scrapers, choppers, drills, and grinding and nutting stones.

The Woodland Period began between 2,000 B.C. and 1,000 B.C. and continued into the time of the arrival of Europeans. It is characterized by the further developments of subsistence agriculture and ceramics, although hunting and gathering continued. In the early part of this period, the bow and arrow came into service, using smaller projectile points called arrowheads. Native Americans of this period began to abandon the nomadic lifestyle for village life. Discoveries of isolated artifacts include a dugout canoe over 1025 years old, an indication that pre-Columbian peoples navigated the river for trading, fishing, hunting and other cultural activities.

The Mississippian Period began in 900 A.D. and co-existed with cultures of the former three periods as well as with the next historic period. The Mississippian Period was characterized by subsistence agriculture with corn being the major crop. Crops were located in areas near villages. As part of their ceremonial activities, the Native Americans constructed flat-topped earthen mounds. Projectile points were small and triangular or pentagonal. Ceramics bore decorations of stamps of rectilinear or curvilinear forms, or they were highly polished.

## **European Settlement**

The Historic Period began with the arrival of European explorers, the earliest of which were Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. The period of written history of Native Americans began with the English colonists on Roanoke Island in 1585. However, it was not until large-scale colonization in the 1730s that the largest impact was made in this period with the introduction of Africans.

During the Historic Period there were a number of Native American groups speaking four Indian languages, including Siouan, Iroquoian, Algonkian and Muskogean. It was from these indigenous groups that the present Native American population has been formed. Artifacts of interest from this period include kaolin and other pipes (items of European influence) for tobacco smoking, gunflints, and ceramics of plain whiteware, pearlware and creamware, together with more traditional types of ceramics. Also found were colored salt-glazed stoneware and various types of porcelain. Dark green bottle fragments from the 19th century are included in these artifacts found along the Lumber River (Knick, 1988).

In 1590, Governor John White returned to find that the colony that he had established in 1587 at Roanoke Island had disappeared. White found evidence that convinced him the colonists had gone to join the Hatteras Tribe of Manteo. Statements by the Reverend Morgan Jones in 1660 offered other evidence of the possible whereabouts of the “Lost Colony”. Reverend Jones claimed to have been contacted by English speaking Indians that lived in what is probably now Robeson County. In 1709, John Lawson came upon English-speaking Indians who claimed white ancestry. The Indians gave him two chickens, an indication of European influence. Such a gift was a European tradition that was introduced to Native Americans in the Eastern United States who, prior to the arrival of Europeans, kept no domestic fowl (Dial and Eliades, 1975, and Benner and McCloud, 1987).

In the 18th century, the uppermost part of the Lumber River basin was home to Native American tribes, some of whose members were refugees from tribes outside of the immediate region. Indians fled to the river’s backwoods and swamplands from the coastal regions to escape the westward advance by Europeans and their descendants. Some of these Native Americans survived the encroachment to their lands. They established rural communities on the banks of the river and today are known as the Lumbee Indians. There were scattered groups of other tribes that also settled in the area, such as the Waccamaw-Siouan Indians, who tended to lead more sedentary lifestyles based on agriculture supplemented by hunting and fishing. The river and its associated swamps became the melting pot of several Indian tribes and, possibly, members of Sir Walter Raleigh’s Lost Colony (Dial and Eliades, 1975).

Europeans from the Scottish Highlands moved into the upper stretches of the river in what is now Scotland County starting in the 1730s and found local Native Americans speaking English. These settlers also found freed and runaway slaves living in the area. Scotland County was formed in 1899 from Richmond County ([www.scotlandcounty.org/History.htm](http://www.scotlandcounty.org/History.htm)). Settlers begin arriving in present day Robeson County as early as 1747, when Henry O’Berry applied for tracts west of Raft Swamp in what was then a part of Bladen County. Robeson County was formed in 1787 from Bladen County ([www.co.robeson.nc.us/](http://www.co.robeson.nc.us/)).

## Post- Independence

The lumber and naval stores industries were very important in the region in the post-Independence era. The river was a vital route for transporting products of these industries and important economically to the towns that would be established along its banks. One-hundred-foot logs were rafted downriver in the late 1800s to Georgetown, South Carolina. The Town of Lumberton was established along the river, known then as Drowning Creek, and later incorporated as the county seat in 1788. Lumberton became an important turpentine and timber town. Today there is little evidence of standing structures related to the lumber and naval stores industries that can be considered significant enough to be of historic value. The few existing structures are in a state of decay. Relic bridge abutments, tram bridges and dock pilings in the Net Hole area downstream from Lumberton serve as reminders of the lumber and naval stores industries. Boardman once was the site of one of the largest sawmills in the Southeastern United States, but when the timber in the surrounding areas had been cut, the sawmill ceased operations.

Princess Ann, the bluff on which the park's current headquarters are located, was chartered in 1796 as the second town in Robeson County. It was also the first inland town established by settlers traveling up the Lumber River from South Carolina. Settlers established the town on the bluff because they knew it would not be flooded and because the area provided an excellent landing along the river. The town is preserved now only as the name of the road that leads to the river.

In the mid 1700s, a group of 50 families, recognized as lawless squatters, lived at the headwaters of the river. They reportedly shot a surveyor who had come to view vacant lands enclosed in the great swamps (Simpson, B. 1991). The daring exploits and lifestyles of somewhat notorious individuals and groups along the river have been recorded, and that history has resulted in some obtaining folk hero status. Such is the case with the legend of the Henry Berry Lowry gang that has been celebrated for many years in the outdoor drama, *Strike at the Wind*. The settings for the scenes in the play are the swamps along the river between Pembroke and Lumberton around 1870. Lumbermen of this era were known for a rough, somewhat lawless lifestyle.

According to poet journalist John Charles McNeill (1874-1907), the Indian name Lumbee was originally used for the Lumber River. Early European surveyors and settlers called it Drowning Creek. That name first appears in colonial records in the act creating Anson County in 1749, where the river was identified as a branch of the Little Pee Dee River. Drowning Creek appears in many land grants and other records for the following 60 years. The river's name, from upper Scotland County downstream to the South Carolina line, was changed by legislative act in 1809 to Lumber River, apparently because of the important lumber and naval stores industries. McNeill described the lumber industry as one that resulted in "choking sawdust, rotting slabs, and the shrill scream of the circular saw" (Simpson, 1991). The Lumbee Indians owe their name, which they officially adopted as their tribal name in 1953, to the river. Today, many years later, some local residents still use the

old Indian name Lumbee for the river. Above State Road 1412 in Scotland County, the headwaters of the river are still known as Drowning Creek.

### **Lumber River Trail Designations**

Area residents have long appreciated the Lumber River as an important recreational resource. In the 1970s, interest in having the river recognized outside the local area began to develop. In 1976, Scotland County began developing a canoe trail on the river by marking the river, developing access points and recreational facilities and printing a brochure. The county also requested in 1976 that the state designate the river as a state trail. Scotland County hoped that such a designation would give a statewide focus to the area and also encourage other counties to upgrade the river.

After light but positive public comments, the Lumber River Trail in Scotland and Hoke counties was designated as part of the North Carolina Trails System in February 1978, the first state recreation trail in North Carolina. The trail started at the US 15-501 bridge crossing and ended approximately 60 miles downstream at the NC 71 Access. A few years later, the trail was nominated and approved for National Recreational Trail designation, the first water trail in the Southeast designated into the national system. A dedication ceremony was held in May of 1981 in Laurinburg.

Interest in the trail grew. The Robeson and Columbus county commissioners passed resolutions supporting development of the Lower Lumber River Canoe Trail and state trail designation. Additional support came from the Lumber River Basin Committee, the Lower Lumber River Preservation Committee, the Lumber River Canoe Club, and park and recreation departments of Robeson and Columbus counties and the City of Lumberton. After investigation and public comments, in May of 1984 the Lower Lumber River Trail was designated a State Recreation Trail. The trail runs approximately 90 miles from the Hoke-Scotland county line downstream to the North Carolina- South Carolina state line. Local governments managed both the upper and lower Lumber River trails, with assistance from local river supporters.

### **Lumber River State Park and State River**

In 1981, the Indian Unity Conference expressed interest in obtaining North Carolina *Natural and Scenic* river designation for the Lumber River. Over several more years, support for designation was sustained by a number of citizen interest groups. The Lumber River Basin Committee (LRBC) became a driving force in seeking the state designation. In 1984, the LRBC petitioned the Robeson County Commissioners, requesting that they ask the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation to conduct a *Natural and Scenic* river study for the Lumber River. The request was made and followed by a similar study request to the state from Columbus County. In response, the Division of Parks and Recreation conducted a qualification study in 1986 and a feasibility study in 1988. In 1989, as a part of extensive public input, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation held public hearings concerning river designation. The study findings and public input were reported to the General Assembly.

The January 1989 report to the General Assembly recommended designating the Lumber River a North Carolina *Natural and Scenic* River and adding the river to the state parks system because: the river was an outstanding resource worthy of inclusion; strong local support for such action existed; and the addition of a blackwater river was consistent with and addressed a need identified in the *Systemwide Plan for the North Carolina State Parks System*. The 1989 General Assembly acted favorably on the report and authorized the Lumber River State Park and State River. The Lumber River legislation (G.S.113A-35.2 (c)) called for development of a master plan to "*...recognize and provide for State and local government protection of the various parts of the river so as to preserve its outstanding character in perpetuity.*" The Lumber River became the fourth (and, at 115 miles in length, by far the longest) river to be included in the North Carolina Natural and Scenic Rivers System.

The Lumber River became the first state park and state river authorized by the General Assembly since passage of the 1987 State Parks Act (G.S. 113-44.7 through 113-44.14). The Act, which established the purposes of the state parks system, also stated that new additions to the state parks system *...shall be accompanied by adequate authorization and appropriations for land acquisition, development, and operations*. The Lumber River legislation, however, included no such appropriations, so the Division of Parks and Recreation was left to figure out how to establish a state park and state river along the 115-mile river without any land ownership or any additional staff or resources, and at a time when the state parks system was already badly in need of additional money and staff.

In 1990, William Cobey, Jr., Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, appointed a Lumber River State Park and State River Citizens Advisory Committee. The Lumber River Park Advisory Committee (PAC), as it came to be known, was composed of over twenty members from the four counties through which the river flows (Columbus, Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland counties). The PAC began working with Division of Parks and Recreation staff, park support groups, local governments and others to turn the dream of a park into reality.

In the fall of 1991, Carolina Power and Light Company (now Progress Energy) issued a challenge grant of \$40,000 for the development of a master plan for the park. Led by the PAC, matching funds were raised from a large number of individuals, businesses and governments in the four counties. The Lumber River Basin Committee was an important participant in both this fund raising and the master planning process as well. After successfully matching the challenge grant, North Carolina State University was contracted to develop the master plan. Once the master plan was complete, public hearings were held in December of 1993, followed by adoption of the master plan in 1994. Also in 1994, James Sessoms became the park's first employee and superintendent of the fledging park.

The park's first land acquisition took place in December of 1991 with the acquisition of 319 acres at Piney Island, followed by an adjacent 218-acre parcel acquired from The Nature Conservancy in July 1992. In October of 1992, land acquisition got underway at Princess Ann. Princess Ann became the site of the first state facility development along the river when, in 1998, a park office/maintenance center, trail, campsites, picnic shelter (Figure I-2),



overlook, and boat access were constructed. With the development at Princess Ann, people wanting to visit Lumber River State Park finally had a place to go.

Land acquisition and protection efforts along the Lumber River have been and continue to be



aided by the Lumber River Conservancy (LRC). Incorporated in March of 1991, the LRC is a land trust that has as its mission the preservation and protection of the Lumber River and its tributaries. Land acquisition has continued, aided greatly by new state grant programs including the Natural Heritage Trust Fund, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. From its humble beginnings, by 2004 the park had grown to include over 8,000 acres.

**Figure I-2. Picnic Shelter at Princess Ann**

### **National Wild and Scenic River Designation**

The Lumber River Park Advisory Committee (PAC) believed that the river deserved federal river designation as well as state designation and requested that the state seek federal designation. On April 15, 1996, Governor James B. Hunt Jr. petitioned the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior to include 115 miles of the Lumber River in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The National Park Service assessed the state's application and released an eligibility report and environmental assessment in July 1998.

The report found that not all of the river met the requirements for designation. The requirements met were: (1) designation of the river into the state river protection system; (2) management of the river by a political subdivision of the state; (3) possession of eligibility criteria such as being free flowing and possessing one or more outstandingly remarkable values. The fourth requirement for federal designation - the existence of effective mechanisms and regulations to protect the river without federal management - was not met for the entire river. The river from the downstream side of the Maxton Airport Swamp (river mile 22) to Back Swamp above Lumberton (river mile 56) did not, in the opinion of the National Park Service, have an adequate plan in place to permanently protect this segment of the river and its corridor. Although federal designation was not recommended for this 34-mile segment, the National Park Service recommended that the rest of the river - 81 of the 115 miles - be included in the national system. On September 28, 1998, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt added 81 miles of the Lumber River to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System ([www.nps.gov/rivers/wsr-lumber.html](http://www.nps.gov/rivers/wsr-lumber.html)).

To celebrate federal *Wild and Scenic* river designation and the opening of the park's first facilities, a dedication ceremony was held at Princess Ann in the fall of 1998. The well-

attended event featured food, fun, displays, canoe trips on the river, short hikes, and environmental education programs. The dedication ceremony featured remarks by state park and National Park Service personnel, local dignitaries and state legislative leaders, and Dr. Andy Ashe (Figure I-3), Chairman of the Lumber River State Park Advisory Committee. Congressman Mike McIntyre (Figure I-4) cut a ribbon stretched across the river to officially open the park and newly designated national *wild and scenic* river.



**Figure I-3. 1998 Dedication Ceremony**



**Figure I-4. Congressman McIntyre Opens the Park**

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